



Canons of the Old Catholic Communion of North America

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Canon I: Of the Province

- 1) The Old Catholic Communion of North America (OCCNA) is an Old Catholic Church divided into two Provinces. The OCCNA is established to provide spiritual continuity among all clergy in the OCCNA with apostolic succession which is deemed necessary for the clergy in the OCCNA to provide valid Sacraments to the faithful. As such the sole duty of the OCCNA is to act to the best of its ability to ensure that all clergy comply with the canons of the OCCNA.
 - a) The Names and geographical boundaries of the Provinces.
 - (1) There are two provinces which are established by time zones. There is the Province of the West which encompasses all states of the United States in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Time Zones. There is a Province of the East which encompasses all states of the United States in the Eastern and Central Time Zones. More provinces may be added as needed based on growth.
 - (2) New Provinces may be added at the discretion of the Episkopos with approval of the House of Bishops.
 - (3) Dioceses may be established in each Province at the Discretion of the Ordinary of the Province with approval of the Episkopos.



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- 2) It is understood that all clergy in the OCCNA and their respective ministries are legally independent, and they are fully responsible for their respective ministries and actions while serving as a cleric in said ministry. As such all clergy are free to leave the OCCNA by seeking a letter of release from the Ordinary or his delegate.
- 3) The OCCNA will notify appropriate civil authorities should the OCCNA be made aware of illegal actions of any clergy in the OCCNA.

Canon II: Of the Governance of the OCCNA

- 1) The OCCNA is led by an Archbishop who has been charged with the role of being the Episkopos (“overseer” or “guardian,”) of the OCCNA and the OCCNA is his Sede (See).
- 2) Both Provinces are led by an Ordinary which in the OCCNA is a bishop.
- 3) The Episkopos may elect to serve as the Ordinary of the Province in which he resides.
- 4) The Episkopos and the Ordinaries are the primary overseers of the Faith and the Canons of the Church.
 - a) A bishop must have established a minimum of one viable parish and have at least three other active clergy and ministries to be considered for elevation to the position of Ordinary or Archbishop.
 - b) The Provincial Ordinary (who may also be an Archbishop) has the authority to elevate clergy to the position of Archpriest within his province.
 - c) The Provincial Ordinary may nominate an Archpriest to be elevated to the office of Suffragan Bishop. The final decision will be determined by process in Canon III.
 - d) In the tradition of the Councils of the Church a House of Bishops shall be formed to discuss and resolve matters of the faith, election of bishops, and changes to these canons.
 - i) The House of Bishops will meet at least annually. An in-person meeting is preferred, however due to travel distances and cost the meeting may be conducted using an online meeting platform.
 - ii) The Archbishop or an Ordinary may call a meeting of the House of Bishops.



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- 5) Of the House of Bishops
 - a) The members of the house of bishops shall consist of all Bishops and Archpriests in the OCCNA.
 - b) After the establishing Episkopos has left the office the House of Bishops shall elect his successor.
 - i) All Bishops and Archpriests form the House of Bishops in both the OCCNA, and each Province has right to vote in decisions called for vote with each office having the following number of votes when cast:
 - (1) Episkopos – 3
 - (2) Ordinary – 2
 - (3) Suffragan – 1
 - (4) Archpriest – ½
- 6) All Bishops will serve until either voluntary retirement or resignation. Or may be removed from office for any reason by unanimous vote of all active clergy, or by 2/3 majority vote of all active clergy along with 2/3 majority vote of all parish council members combined, for the following reasons:
 - i) Failure to repent from known state of mortal sin.
 - ii) Professing a faith which is contrary to tenants of the faith.
 - iii) Gross neglect of duties.
 - iv) Sexual misconduct – see Canon IV – Of Holy Orders
 - b) In all these events the Bishop shall be notified by a representative elected by the House of Bishops. The offense/s clearly communicated, and a time frame of not less than three months allowed for reconciliation. During this reconciliation period another Bishop may be appointed by the Episkopos to serve as the administrator of a Province or Diocese. Should the Episkopos be the cleric suspended at which time the House of Bishops shall elect a Provincial Ordinary by simple majority to serve as a temporary replacement.

Canon III – Elections of Bishops

- 1) Election of the Episkopos
 - a) The Episkopos of the OCCNA shall be elected by the House of Bishops. The election shall normally take place at a called House of Bishops Meeting. A candidate for the office of Episkopos shall be a Bishop of this Church.



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The candidate must be elected by receiving not less than two-thirds (2/3) of the votes. Votes are set forth in Canon II, Section 5.

2) Election of a Bishop

- a) The House of Bishops by 2/3 vote determines the necessity for additional bishops in the OCCNA. The House of Bishops shall determine the number of candidates for Bishop to be elected.
- b) The House of Bishops in closed meeting will discuss the qualification of each candidate and then by secret ballot vote on which candidate to be consecrated. A candidate must receive 2/3 majority to be elected. If there is not a 2/3 majority the process will be repeated. If after this vote there is no 2/3 majority then the election shall be nullified, and the Episkopos will determine if the process should be restarted.

Canon IV: Of the Old Catholic Faith

1. The OCCNA professes the orthodox Old Catholic faith as set forth in the intent of the founders of Old Catholicism whose intent it was to return the Latin (Western Church) as was clearly stated in the paragraph of Declaration of the Bishops of the Old Catholic Church, Utrecht, Sep 24, 1889:

“We adhere faithfully to the Rule of Faith laid down by St. Vincent of Lerins in these terms: “Id teneamus, ubique quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.” For this reason, we persevere in professing the faith of the primitive Church, as formulated in the ecumenical symbols and specified precisely by the unanimously accepted decisions of the Ecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years”

Sadly, many churches now, including the founding churches of this faith have taken on many postmodern beliefs and heresies and in doing so have strayed from the sound Doctrine of Christ which is the cornerstone of the church and the Doctrine of the Apostles which is the foundation of the church.

Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.



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Ac 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Ro 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Ro 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them

Because of this the House of Bishops of the OCCNA in Holy Synod formulated the declaration of faith intended to return to the Doctrine once embraced by all churches who were of the catholic faith.

Profession of the Old Catholic Faith formulated by the

Old Catholic Communion of North America Bishops
Assembled in synod on August 16th, 2019, and amended in 2026

1. We faithfully adhere to the Rule of Faith laid down by St. Vincent of Lerins in these terms: “*Id teneamus, ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.*” (We hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and of all people; for that is truly and properly Catholic.) For this reason, we persevere in professing the faith of the primitive Church, as formulated in the ecumenical symbols and specified precisely by the unanimously accepted decisions of the Ecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years of which there were seven.
 - a. Therefore, we reject the decrees of the First Vatican Council which were promulgated July 18th, 1870, concerning the infallibility and the universal Episcopate of the Bishop of Rome. These decrees contradict the Faith of the ancient Church and which destroy its ancient canonical constitution by attributing to the Pope the plenitude of ecclesiastical powers over all dioceses and over all the faithful. By denial of his primatial jurisdiction we do not wish to deny the historic primacy which several Ecumenical Councils



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and the Fathers of the ancient Church have attributed to the Bishop of Rome by recognizing him as the *Primus inter pares* (first among equals).

- b. Therefore, we reject the dogma of the Immaculate Conception promulgated by Pius IX in 1854 as being in contradiction to the Tradition of the first centuries in that Dogma could only be declared by an Ecumenical Council. In the time of the undivided church the East and Latin churches had differing understandings of the consequences of the fall of Adam (Ancestral and Original Sin) and as such the necessity of the Holy Virgin being Immaculate from conception or becoming Immaculate when the Holy Spirit descended upon Mary were both accepted and being debated. While the OCCNA professes the teaching of the Eastern Church we also acknowledge that only an Ecumenical council could decree such beliefs as dogma or not and therefore will not stand in judgment of the Roman Church which chooses to profess the Immaculate Conception.
 - c. Therefore, reject the dogmatization of the Catholic teaching of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Pius XII in 1950 as being in defiance of the Tradition of the first centuries in that Dogma could only be declared by an Ecumenical Council. However, we do profess the belief in the Dormition, and Assumption of Mary was commonly held in the Undivided Church and as such consider this to be a matter of personal piety and devotion and not a Dogma of the Faith.
2. As stated in the Road to Unity: We believe that what defines Catholicism as a religion is the dogmatic expression given in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, as confirmed by the 4th Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon. In this creed the confession of faith in the Triune God is followed by the confession of faith in "the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church".



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- a) The Church is *one*, for just as Christ the Head of the Church is one, so, too, there is also one body animated by the Holy Spirit, in which Christ as Head and believers as members are united. In this body all the local Churches are united to one another by the unity of faith, worship and order
 - b) The Church is holy since Christ its Head is holy and gave himself for it "that he might sanctify it ... that the Church might be presented before him in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that it might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). Christ made the Church the "household of God" (I Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6); he gave it fellowship to share in his holiness and grace and in his divine life; he "who sanctified the people through his own blood" (Heb. 13: 12). Christians are therefore also called saints (Acts 9:13).
 - c) The Church is catholic, since Christ its Head is the Lord of all things. It is predestined to extend to the whole creation, over all peoples and through all ages (Mt. 28:20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8). This is the external quantitative meaning of catholicity.
 - d) The Church is apostolic, since its divine founder was the first "apostle" (Heb. 3:1; cf. Gal. 4:4), and because it is built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).
2. Considering that the Holy Eucharist has always been the true central point of Catholic worship, we consider it our right to declare that we maintain with perfect fidelity the ancient Catholic doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, by believing that we receive the Body and Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ under the species of bread and wine. The Eucharistic celebration in the Church is neither a continual repetition nor a renewal of the expiatory sacrifice which Jesus offered once for all upon the Cross: but it is a sacrifice because it is the perpetual commemoration of the sacrifice offered upon the Cross, and it is the act by which we represent upon earth and appropriate to ourselves the one offering which Jesus Christ makes in Heaven, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews



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9:11-12, for the salvation of redeemed humanity, by appearing for us in the presence of God (Heb. 9:24). The character of the Holy Eucharist, being thus understood, it is, at the same time, a sacrificial feast, by means of which the faithful, in receiving the Body and Blood of our Saviour, enter into communion with one another (1 Cor. X. 17).

3. As in the Early Church the Old Catholic Church teaches that every bishop, "the living icon of Christ," and his flock constitute the Church in a certain place; or, as St. Ignatius the God-bearer says, the Church of Christ is in the bishop, his priests and deacons, with the people, surrounding the Eucharist in the true faith. All bishops and their flocks so constituted, together composing the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In other words, there can be no Church without a bishop, no bishop without the Eucharist, and no bishop or Eucharist without the true faith, the Apostolic Faith, "the faith once delivered to the saints." (Jude 3) "The Church is in the bishop and the bishop in the Church," wrote St. Cyprian of Carthage.
4. Also, there can be no Church without the Eucharist, the Sacrament of unity, because the Church is formed through it. The Body and Blood of Christ unites the Faithful to God: This fellowship or koinonia is the whole purpose of Christianity. At the same time, there can be no Eucharist - and no other Mysteries - without a bishop who teaches the true faith to the baptized.
5. We believe there are seven sacraments or mysteries of the Catholic Church, which were instituted by Jesus and entrusted to the Church. Sacraments are visible rites seen as signs and efficacious channels of the grace of God to all those who receive them with the proper disposition. The sevenfold list of sacraments is often organized into three categories: the sacraments of initiation (into the Church, the body of Christ), consisting of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist; the sacraments of healing, consisting of reconciliation and anointing of the sick; and the sacraments of service: holy orders and matrimony.
6. The OCCNA believes Apostolic Succession which is the unbroken line of succession beginning with the apostles and perpetuated through bishops by laying on of hands with proper ritual and intent is essential for Holy



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Orders and Sacraments to be valid. We only recognize the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Church of the East, and traditional Old Catholic and Anglican Churches which do not ordain females as having valid Apostolic Succession and even then the succession must be tested by the bishop having a church in which the fruits of his labor of ministry to the laity is present for just as there can be no church without the bishop there can be no bishop without the church.

7. We exhort the priests under our jurisdiction: to teach the essential Christian truths by the proclamation of the Word of God and by the instruction of the faithful; to seek and practice charity when discussing controversial doctrines; and in word and deed to set, in accordance with the foundations of Scripture, Apostolic Doctrine, and the magisterium of the Apostolic Tradition. (Ephesians 2:19) And based on this foundation we reject the contemporary innovations promulgated by many Anglican and Old Catholic Churches, namely: the ordination of women to the Holy Priesthood, the consecration of women to the Episcopate, the blessing of same-sex unions, and baptism in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier. We also regard these innovations as being in defiance of the Holy Scriptures and in contradiction to the Tradition of the first centuries.
8. By maintaining and professing faithfully the doctrine of Jesus Christ, by refusing to admit those errors which by the fault of men have crept into the Catholic Church, by laying aside the abuses in ecclesiastical matters, together with the worldly tendencies of the hierarchy, we believe that we shall be able to combat efficaciously the great evils of our day, which are unbelief and indifference in matters of religion.

Ceremonial

Old Catholic ceremonial follows the general tradition and practice of Western Catholic Christendom. Any person familiar with the ceremonial of the Roman Catholic Church will, therefore, have no difficulty in following an Old Catholic Mass. Eucharistic Vestments are worn, and the Celebrant is attended by Servers. The Altar and its ornaments are similar



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to those in a Roman Church. A Sanctus Bell is rung generally. Incense is in common use.

There are no silent Masses. Said Masses, without music, and Sung Masses will be found. In some Parishes the congregation answers with the Server. Various settings of music are employed for parts of the Liturgy.

Communion in Both Kinds is the general Old Catholic custom. In some churches Communion is given by Intinction.

Accepted and Sealed by our signatures on August 16th, 2019.

Four signatures are shown, each on a horizontal line. From top to bottom: Bishop Michael G. Nesmith, Bishop Robert Burgess, Bishop Thomas Mercier, and Bishop Peter Seibold.

9. We accept as doctrinal, *The Road to Unity A collection of agreed statements of the joint Old Catholic Orthodox Theological Commission.*
 - a. We recommend the following translations of Scripture in order of preference:
 - i. The Orthodox Study Bible, by Thomas Nelson (Jun 17, 2008)
 - ii. The New King James or King James with Apocrypha.
 - iii. The New American (Catholic) Bible.
10. In summary we believe the intent of the founding fathers of the Old Catholic movement intended fully to return to the orthodox theology of the early and undivided church of the West. As such we accept and profess the same theology as our Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters as expressed in the seven Ecumenical Councils with the following exceptions:
 - a. We accept as binding all the Anathema decrees of the Councils, however we like all others in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church reserve the right and privilege to determine which, if any, of the Early Church Canons and Canons of the Councils are applicable to the mission of the OCCNA at this time.



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- b. We allow bishops to be married as was allowed in the first centuries of the church and as expressed in Sacred Scripture (Timothy 3:2).
- c. We allow women to serve as in all lay ministries up to and including Sub deaconess (see Canon VI - Of the Laity) as set forth by the guidance and canons of the Early Church and Councils and Sacred Scripture. (Romans 16:1- 2).
- d. We believe the Nicene Creed is the Statement of the Faith of the Church and we accept and allow the Apostles Creed to be professed in the Liturgy as the Baptismal symbol of the Church.

Canon V: Of the Liturgy

- 1) It is recommended that all clergy use the approved OCCNA Old Catholic Missal for the principal Mass. The Missal adheres to the Structure of the Divine Liturgy according to the Divine Liturgy of St. Gregory. The Missal is published by the OCCNA using the vernacular of the people in adherence to the founding documents in Canon 2 section 2. However, other Rites and Rituals may be used at other masses as approved by the Ordinary in advance:
 - a) Before seeking to use an alternate rite, the clergy need to ensure the rite requested be identical in matter, form, and intent to those used by other historic Catholic churches, specifically the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal, Anglican, Old Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches and in compliance with the Profession of the Old Catholic Faith, and the canons of this church. For reference any rites which do not meet the following will not be approved:
 - i) In the liturgy references to the Trinity must be in the traditional Catholic format, i.e., God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
 - ii) The Rite must contain a General Confession and Absolution either in the Mass or immediately prior to the Introit or Opening Hymn.

Canon VI: Of the Sacraments

- 1) Baptism
 - a) We accept as licit (valid) all baptisms by triple immersion or infusion in the name of the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as long as said



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denomination or church embraces the same understanding of the Trinity as does the Holy Catholic Church.

- b) We encourage the baptism of infants.
- c) Proper instruction in the faith should be provided for those being baptized or if an infant, their parents and godparents.

2) Confirmation

- a) There is no physical age to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The pastor should ensure that the individual seeking Confirmation has been taught the basics of the faith.
- b) Bishops are allowed to grant their priests authority to confirm.
- c) Individuals Confirmed in another Church with valid Apostolic Succession (Roman, Eastern Orthodox, and some Anglican) will be received

3) Holy Eucharist / Communion

- a) We believe all validly baptized Christians are welcome to receive the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ (Holy Communion). This belief is founded in the tradition of both the Early Church and the Eastern Church. It is our belief that spiritual infancy is not subject to physical age and therefore we will feed all who hunger.
 - i) However, we do also believe that all adult communicants must eventually make an adult commitment to the faith and receive the Sacrament of Confirmation or be Received if already Confirmed in a Church with valid Apostolic Succession.
 - ii) Clergy should be diligent to teach the catholic faith and if the faith is rejected by an individual after due course, or if a person who is of the faith falls into mortal sin reception of communion may and should be withheld.

4) Anointing / Unction

- a) The Sacrament can only be provided by a Priest or Bishop as remission of sin is part of the rite.
- b) The Ritual shall conform to the approved Missal.

5) Marriage

- a) Marriage is a Holy Union between a man and a woman.



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- b) A couple should receive proper instruction regarding a Christian Marriage prior to the wedding.
 - c) Both the bride and the groom must be baptized to be wed.
 - d) A Wedding Mass with Holy Communion is strongly encouraged.
 - e) A Wedding Mass with Holy Communion must be conducted in a recognized place of worship unless approved by the celebrant's Bishop.
- 6) Reconciliation
- a) A General Confession and Absolution must be an integral part of the Mass.
 - b) While auricular confession before a priest is not required each Priest should regularly teach the importance of the Rite of Reconciliation in the healing process especially in grievous or reoccurring sinful actions.
 - c) The seal of the confessional is binding.
- 7) Holy Orders
- a) A person is called to Sacred Orders to serve all of the people of God administering the Sacraments and preaching the Word.
 - i) All non-retired clergy are expected to be active in their chosen ministry and file regular reports to the Ordinary.
 - ii) All Clergy must have personal and general liability insurance.
 - iii) Failure to be active in a ministry may be considered gross neglect of duty.
 - b) The candidate for Orders must be a confirmed / received Old Catholic.
 - c) All Candidates prior to being accepted as a postulant will:
 - i) Submit the required application to the Ordinary.
 - ii) Submit to and pay for a background check by a firm selected by the OCCNA.
 - iii) May be required to undergo a psychological examination at the expense of the candidate.
 - iv) Will be involved in phone and or online interviews and may be required to travel for a minimum of one personal interview with the bishop (or his delegate) at a location designated by the bishop.
 - v) Will travel as needed for practicum and ordination – or pay the expenses of the Bishop to travel for either or both.
 - vi) Celibacy is optional and not a requirement for Holy Orders.



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- vii) Chastity within one's state of life is required of all Christians, and a clergyperson is called and expected to be a model and example of Christian virtue.
- d) To be eligible for the Sacred Order of Deacon, the candidate must be at least 21 years of age and:
 - i) Completed all of the approved courses of study in the church disciplines of Sacred Scripture, Sacred Theology, Liturgy, Homiletics, and other studies and practicum as instructed by the Ordinary.
 - ii) The dress of a deacon is black pants and black clergy shirt. Primary vestments are Alb with cincture, deacons stole, and optional dalmatic. Alternate vestments are cassock and surplice with deacons stole. All vestments reflect the color of the season of the Church.
- e) To be eligible for the Sacred Order of Priesthood, the deacon candidates must be male and at least 24 years of age and:
 - i) Served the church as an active deacon for at least six months unless a request to defer requirement has been approved by the Episkopos.
 - ii) Completed all courses of study in the church disciplines and practicum required by the Ordinary.
 - iii) Implemented a plan of ministry and if establishing a mission, parish, shelter, or any other ministry where funds are collected incorporated the ministry as a state non-profit corporation or church. Federal 501c3 incorporation is not required.
 - iv) The dress of a priest is black pants and black clergy shirt. Primary vestments are alb with cincture, priests stole, and chasuble (may be worn during entire Eucharist or vested prior to Holy Communion) Alternate vestments are cassock and surplice with priests stole and chasuble. All vestments reflect the color of the season of the Church
- f) To be eligible for the Sacred Order of Bishop, the priest candidate must be nominated and elected as set forth in Canon III.
 - i) The dress of a bishop is black pants and black or purple clergy shirt. Primary vestments are Alb with cincture, cope, priests stole (or optional pallium if Ordinary), and chasuble (may be worn during entire Eucharist or vested prior to Holy Communion, or house cassock and surplice with



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priests stole and chasuble or pallium if Ordinary, and chasuble zucchetto, mitre, ring, crosier, and pectoral cross. All vestments reflect the color of the season of the Church

- i) Clergy from other communions seeking incardination must submit all items required of a postulant and in addition:
 - i) Provide a letter of release from their current bishop.
 - ii) Provide copies of studies and ordination certificates.
 - (1) If not well educated in the Old Catholic Faith, they may be required to submit to additional studies.
 - iii) Provide references both ordained and lay.
 - iv) Submit a ministry plan to their bishop.
- g) All Clergy will serve until either voluntary retirement or resignation or may be removed or suspended from office by the Ordinary.
- h) Some situations which may lead to suspension of faculties in the OCCNA are, but not limited to:
 - i) Alleged sexual misconduct including but not limited to (harassment, child pornography, pedophilia, homosexual acts, and adultery or any other offenses outlined in the church policy “Protecting the People of God”.)
 - ii) Alleged theft or embezzlement of Church funds.
 - iii) Failure to repent from known state of mortal sin.
 - iv) Professing a faith which is contrary to tenants of the Old Catholic Faith.
 - v) Failure to comply with the Canons of the OCCNA
- i) Gross neglect of duties
 - (1) In all these events the Ordinary shall provide counsel and clear notification that suspension or removal may occur and may allow a sabbatical of not more than six months for reflection and reconciliation. The Ordinary may appoint another cleric to serve in the absence of the cleric on sabbatical.
 - (a) Some reasons which will lead to immediate suspension of faculties or removal (defrocking) without a sabbatical are:
 - (b) Confirmed sexual misconduct including but not limited to (harassment, child pornography, pedophilia, homosexual acts, and



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adultery or any other offenses outlined in the church policy
“Protecting the People of God”.)

- (c) Theft or embezzlement of Church funds.
- (d) Failure to repent from condition/s resulting in suspension.
- j) If a cleric believes they have been unjustly sanctioned by the Ordinary they may appeal to their fellow clergy and with 2/3 majority in agreement a spokesperson (appointed by those in agreement) along with the cleric in question should petition the Ordinary for a meeting. If at the meeting the Ordinary fails to present sound and valid reasons for the sanction, then by a 4/5 majority vote of all clergy the Ordinary may be overturned. The cleric making the appeal understands and accepts that their personal and confidential file will be opened for review by first the spokesperson and then by all clergy should the issue go to vote.
 - (1) Be advised that overturning the Ordinary is a most serious and grievous matter and should not be entered into lightly. Such a situation may indicate the Ordinary himself is failing to exercise his bounden duty and vow to serve as the Defender of the Faith.

Canon VII: Of the Laity

- 1) Communicant in Good Standing
 - a) Any person baptized as set forth in these Canons, who acknowledges the authority of the Canons of the OCCNA, is regular in attendance and receipt of the Sacraments at public worship and striving to partake of a lifestyle free from mortal sin shall be considered a communicant in good standing.
- 2) Member In Good Standing
 - a) Any baptized and confirmed person of the age of sixteen years or more, who is regular in attendance at public worship and by financial aid, shall be considered a member in Good Standing (member) and entitled to vote in its affairs. Any member, who, for one year, shall refrain from regular worship, and from contributing toward the support of the parish may be removed from the list of members of the Parish entitled to vote. No person who disclaims or refuses conformity to faith of the Old Catholic Church, the doctrine, discipline, worship and the Canons of the OCCNA, or the authority



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of the Parish shall be eligible to hold office in the Parish or entitled to vote in its affairs.

- 3) Special Lay Ministries: Below find titles and descriptions of various lay ministries in which the participant will be involved in either teaching the faith and/or participating directly in the worship of the Church. Because of the importance of these ministries all candidates must be regular in attendance, living a moral life, and if an adult a member in good standing. Each candidate should understand the importance of the position and strive to serve in a manner that reflects a servant's heart. In addition, each candidate must understand how their actions both in and out of the church as well as their personal appearance directly impact the attitude and piety of those to whom they serve. It is required that any laity working with minors have a background check and work in pairs.
- a) Teacher. Must be a confirmed member of the parish or mission as defined by the parish and be trained in the subject area they will teach. Minimum age 18 years. Licensure by Pastor
 - b) Catechist (teaches persons seeking baptism, confirmation, and may lead Bible Studies). Must be a confirmed member of the parish or mission and be trained in the subject area they will teach. Minimum age 18 years. Requires licensure by Bishop.
 - c) Lector. A lector is the person who proclaims the first or second reading at Mass. This person also may lead the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass. Must be confirmed. Minimum age 14 years (youth services only) and 18 years for regular service. A lector must have the qualifications listed below and have a desire to minister in this capacity at the Eucharistic liturgy. Licensure by Pastor.
 - i) Lectors should be carefully chosen based on their skills in proclamation, their willingness to complete formation in this ministry, and their evidence of deep spirituality.
 - ii) All new candidates for lector must receive training, either from their pastor or his delegate/ The instruction must include the following:
 - (1) Instructions in Liturgy of the Word.
 - (2) Proclaiming the Word: practicum and formation in public speaking.



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- 4) Acolyte or Altar Server. There are three levels of Acolyte. All must be baptized and regular in attendance. Licensure by Pastor.
 - a) Acolyte I – Minimum age 6 years. Duties may include being a crucifer, torch bearer, collecting alms, ringing Sanctus bells. They may not serve the Altar.
 - b) Acolyte II – Minimum Age 10 Years. Duties include all those of an Acolyte I and include being trained as thurifer and serving at the Altar.
 - c) Acolyte III – Minimum age 14 Years. Must be confirmed. Duties include all those of Acolyte I and II and may serve as lector, chalice bearer (serve chalice at Holy Communion), and train acolytes.
- 5) Lay Eucharistic Minister.
 - a) Minimum age 18 and have background check. Must be Member of Parish in good standing. Must be Acolyte III and Lector and have served in these ministries for a minimum of six months. May be trained by pastor to provide various Lay Services. May be trained to take communion to those who cannot attend Mass. Requires licensure by Bishop.
- 6) Subdeacon or Sub-deaconess
 - a) The Subdeacon's role is essentially as an assistant to the deacon in performing his diaconal role. Must be Lay Eucharist Minister for no less than one year. Must be Catechist. Will provide lay services. Will assist in planning services. The Subdeacon is charged with reading the Epistle at a High Mass (Holy Days) and Pontifical Mass (when Bishop is present and presiding) and with assisting the deacon with the preparation of the oblations and performs ablutions in absence of a Deacon.
 - (1) Assists the deacon during the reading of the Gospel by carrying the Gospel Book to and/or from the place of proclamation, and by acting as a support for the book while the Gospel is read. At pontifical services the Subdeacon also assists the deacon in the vesting of the bishop and in the absence of a deacon may, hold the bishop's service book, staff, and assist in other ways as directed by the bishop.
 - b) The dress of a Subdeacon will be determined by the Ordinary. Primary vestments are Alb, cincture, and a plain (non-ornate) tunicle / dalmatic. Alternate vestments are cassock and surplice with tunicle. All vestments



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reflect the liturgical color of the season of the Church. Requires appointment by Bishop.

- 7) As is the case for Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, it is expected that Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Subdeacon's shall do their best to pattern their lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ, striving in all things to be wholesome examples to the people of God. Thus, it is not appropriate to recommend for licensing anyone whose lifestyle is an affront to the gospel, including but not limited to anyone known to be perpetrating fraud, malicious gossip, or someone known to be engaging in sexual relations outside of holy matrimony or any other offenses outlined in the church policy "Protecting the People of God".

Canon VIII: Of Freewill Offerings (Tithe)

1) Of the Faithful:

- a) It is acknowledged that the minimum biblical tithe of the faithful is 10% of all first fruits (Time, Talent, and Treasure). Clergy are admonished and encouraged to teach and help the faithful to understand how such sacrificial offering leads first to a deeper trust in the Holy Spirit and second how such sacrificial offering helps to build the entire church and as such the Kingdom of God, which is the call of discipleship.
- b) It is acknowledged that funds received from sources other than "first fruits", i.e., funds from fundraisers and gifts, are not to be considered as offerings of "first fruits".

2) Of a Parish or Mission:

- a) A parish or mission as defined by the canons shall set aside a tithe for the Province in which they are located. Each Province shall set aside an offering for the OCCNA. Both the Province and the OCCNA shall use these funds to assist with building the Kingdom elsewhere. (i.e., assisting missions, outreach work, travel to visit missions and other communions, etc.) A report on the use of such funds may be requested by parishes making such offerings.
- b) A Parish as defined by the canons shall provide for the travel expenses when the bishop visits.



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3) Of the Clergy:

- a) A motion was presented by and agreed upon by unanimous vote by all clergy present at the 2016 National Synod that all clergy should tithe to their parish. If a cleric does not have a parish, he should submit his offering directly to his ordinary.

Canon IX: Of Parishes, Missions, and Ministry

1) Parish, Mission, and Ministry Defined

- a) A Parish is a local body of faithful with a minimum of 20 adult members in good standing. A Parish will have a Parish Council as determined by the By-Laws of the Parish or Dioceses. The By-Laws should be developed under the guidance of the Ordinary and comply with all secular laws.
- b) A Mission is a local body of the faithful of less than 20 adult members in good standing with a parish council appointed by the cleric in charge.
- c) A Ministry is any action taken by any ordained clergy in good standing of the OCCNA acting in the capacity of a cleric. I.E, leading worship, teaching, providing Spiritual and Pastoral Counseling, etc.)

2) Of a National Church

- a) The Parish agrees to comply with the Canons/ By-Laws of the Diocese of its residence as established and set forth by the Bishop Ordinary of the diocese as long as those Canons/ By-Laws are not contrary to the Canons of the OCCNA.

3) Legal Standing

- a) Each Parish, Mission, and Individual Ministry (herein called Ministry) is fully owned and operated by the Ministry and not the OCCNA. Each Ministry is responsible for complying with all Federal, State, and Local laws and regulations. Each Ministry is solely responsible for any and all legal actions against the Ministry and as such the OCCNA strongly recommends each Ministry incorporate in the state in which it is located and strongly recommends procuring all necessary insurance to protect its property and actions of the Ministry
- b) The Ministry shall, to the extent legally permissible, indemnify the OCCNA



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against all expenses and liabilities, including, without limitation, counsel fees, judgments, fines, excise taxes, penalties and settlement payments, reasonably incurred by or imposed upon the Ministry in connection with any threatened, pending or completed action, suit or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative (a "proceeding"), in which the Ministry may become involved.

4) Dissolution of the Parish

- a) In the event it should become necessary to dissolve a Parish or Mission the Bishop Ordinary must be notified so that all Consecrated items owned by the Parish or Mission and not the clergy may be liquidated in a manner that reflects due reverence. The Officers and Parish Council shall, after paying and making provisions for the payment of all liabilities, distribute all the assets of the parish over to the House of Bishops of the OCCNA (HOB), The HOB may elect to liquidate any or all assets with the net proceeds donated to another Parish in the OCCNA, or to another non-profit religious organization which has been recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service and approved by the OCCNA.